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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)  
SUBJECT: NSA KIM FORECASTS PRODUCTIVE SUMMIT, ADVOCATES  
SHORT STATEMENT

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Over a cordial lunch with the Ambassador on March 12, National Security Adviser Kim Byung-kook said that he was sure President Bush and ROK President Lee Myung-bak would get along well in their April summit meeting. Kim is planning a trip to the U.S. March 17-19 to meet with senior U.S. officials regarding the agenda and deliverables for the summit. Kim said that he advised Lee to be patient and aim for a short joint statement, focusing on broad goals and principles with only a few concrete initiatives. He cited three signals that would publicly demonstrate closer U.S.-ROK cooperation: Lee addressing a Joint Session of Congress during his April trip, a joint statement, and progress on the Visa Waiver Program. Kim was reluctant to talk about the beef issue, and the Ambassador cautioned that Kim may face questions in Washington. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Kim said that he was sure Presidents Bush and Lee would get along well. He cited their common business background, friendly dispositions, religious beliefs, and deep commitment to democratic values.

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Core Beliefs  
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¶3. (C) Kim said that, despite the public attention to Lee's pragmatic foreign policy approach, the president has some core, fixed beliefs. He noted that the first decision Lee had made as president was to make the March 3 announcement to the UN High Human Rights Council about the importance of addressing the North Korean human rights situation. Kim said this is an issue about which Lee feels very strongly. The Ambassador noted that President Bush also feels very strongly about these issues as does Congress, suggesting that perhaps human rights and the treatment of North Korean refugees could be a summit agenda item. The Ambassador said that the U.S. and the ROK might want to think about working together to secure greater Chinese cooperation on North Korean refugee issues.

¶4. (C) Lee's concern with reinforcing the U.S.-ROK alliance is another of these beliefs, according to Kim, who described the alliance as "frayed" -- a word which he took great care in selecting. Kim said the ROKG has focused mostly on working with the Department of Defense and the Department of

State, but now Korea needed to concentrate on building better ties to Congress. The Ambassador urged Kim to set aside time for President Lee to meet with senior Congressional leaders individually, noting that these meetings could ultimately have more impact than group meetings or addressing a Joint Session.

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Three Signals  
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¶15. (C) Kim agreed on the importance of individual meetings but named the realization of Lee speaking to a Joint Session of Congress as the primary public signal of Korean and U.S. intentions to improve alliance relations. He said he appreciated State's support in this effort and knew the ROK Embassy in Washington was working hard on the issue. The primary issue was de-conflicting Lee's schedule with the Pope's.

¶16. (C) The second signal, Kim said, would be the joint statement from the April summit. Kim said he told President Lee not to get overly ambitious in either the joint statement or in deliverables; Lee had five years in office and there would be future meetings. Kim later admitted that in providing this advice to his president, he had not thought about President Bush's time constraints. Still he was adamant about keeping the joint statement short, focusing on broad goals and principles with only a few concrete initiatives.

¶17. (C) The third signal would be progress on the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Kim noted that this is an exceptionally important issue to Koreans. Kim also responded positively to the Ambassador's suggestions about expanding the Fulbright

teaching assistants program and looking into some sort of working holiday agreement for students, like the pilot program the U.S. has with Australia and New Zealand.

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Middle East  
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¶18. (C) Kim said the ROKG is working very hard to resolve the North Korean refugee issue in Yemen, but they were also being very careful to keep it out of the media to avoid putting too much pressure on the Yemeni government.

¶19. (C) Kim said that the ROKG would welcome more coordination with the U.S. on Korean equities in the Middle East, especially on the issue of energy. Kim cited the potential Korean investment in the Kurdish region as an example. He said Lee is working very hard on this with the oil interests, but that the situation is very complex. In evaluating the project, Kim said there was a need to consider local and central government relations, the stability of the Kurdish government, and the protection of the investment.

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Climate Change  
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¶10. (C) Kim suggested another area for potential U.S.-ROK cooperation is on climate change. He noted that the Koreans are working on an agreement with Japan for Lee's visit there. Kim admitted he did not know what kind of an agreement the U.S. and Korean governments could put together, but they were interested in discussing it. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. and ROK approaches to climate change were very similar and thought this could be highlighted at the summit.

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Beef  
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¶11. (C) Kim was reluctant to discuss the beef issue. The Ambassador told Kim that he should probably be prepared for

questions on resolution of the beef issue during Kim's trip to Washington. Kim said it was unnecessary to discuss the issue because, "you know what I think, and I know what you think." Nevertheless, the Ambassador underscored, Kim should be prepared to articulate the ROKG position to senior U.S. officials who will not be content to take vague assurances that a solution is imminent. The Ambassador also cautioned that it would be a disappointment if the current government allowed political considerations to walk back former president Roh Moo-hyun's public pledges to resolve the beef issue based solely on science.

VERSHBOW